United Nations E/ECE/1471/Rev.1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 April 2015

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Sixty-sixth session
Geneva, 14–16 April 2015
Item 1 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda

Committing to action on sustainable development in times of change

Revised annotated provisional agenda for the sixty-sixth session[1]

To be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 14 April 2015

I. Provisional agenda

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda.

A. High-level segment: Committing to action on sustainable development in times of change

2. High-level dialogue.
3. High-level thematic discussions:
   (a) Sustainable energy and resilient communities;
   (b) Sustainable management of ecosystems and natural resources;

[1] Delegates attending the sixty-sixth session of the Commission are requested to either register online or complete the registration form available at the website (www.unece.org/index.php?id=35851#/) and transmit it to the ECE secretariat, if possible at least two weeks prior to the session, either by e-mail (info.ece@unece.org) or fax (+41 (0)22 917 0566). At the Pregny Gate of the Palais des Nations (14, Avenue de la Paix), delegates should obtain an identification badge from the Pass and Identification Unit of the UNOG Security and Safety Section (see map and other practical information available at www.unece.org/meetings/practical.html) which is open every work day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. In case of difficulty, please contact the ECE secretariat by telephone at +41 (0)22 917 1316.

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(c) Connectivity and competitiveness for sustainable lives;

(d) Measuring and monitoring sustainable development;

(e) Partnering for sustainable development.

4. Discussion and endorsement of the outcome document.

B. General segment

5. Progress in the implementation of the outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE.

6. Report on activities of the Executive Committee.

7. Other issues calling for decision by the Commission.

8. Election of officers.

9. Other business.

10. Adoption of the report of the session.

II. Annotations to the provisional agenda

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda

Documentation: E/ECE/1471

1. The Commission will adopt its agenda.

A. High-level segment: Committing to action on sustainable development in times of change

2. High-level dialogue

Documentation: E/ECE/1473

2. The ECE region has experienced significant change with both economic challenges and political tensions in recent years. At the same time the world is moving towards a set of ambitious and action-oriented Sustainable Development Goals. The sixty-sixth session of the Commission is an opportunity for ECE and its member States to come together and commit to action on sustainable development.

3. The Commission will also serve as the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development and give input to the 2015 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

4. The high-level dialogue will be a cross-cutting panel discussion followed by an interactive session among participants. A background note will raise possible issues for discussion. These will include:

- How can we, through regional cooperation, transform the proposed Sustainable Development Goals into guidelines, standards, regulations and policies that will help countries to achieve the goals and take action?

- How can we create and facilitate new partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society that lead to action towards sustainable development?
- How can we develop a framework for accountability and monitoring of sustainable development?

3. High-level thematic discussions

Documentation: E/ECE/1474

5. High-level thematic discussions will take the form of moderated, multi-stakeholder debates on change and cooperation, and will address key questions on five thematic issues.

6. The following topics are proposed for the high-level thematic discussions focused on actions and commitments:

(a) Sustainable energy and resilient communities

7. The ECE region faces significant challenges with a call for large reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and for societies that are resilient to climate change. However, reconceiving the energy system in support of a sustainable future is also an opportunity to improve energy efficiency from source to use, minimize environmental impacts, reduce energy and carbon intensities, and correct energy market failures. There is a need for sustainable housing and smart cities that are energy-efficient and resilient and that promote an integrated approach to planning focused on all three dimensions of sustainability. There is a need for sustainable transport systems that can offer a choice for mobility while addressing challenges, such as climate change, local pollution and safety, both at city and national levels.

8. What can ECE and its member States do to ensure sustainable energy production, reliable energy transit and efficient energy consumption? What can ECE and its member States do to stimulate transition towards this goal?

9. The discussion will highlight selected (recent and expected) key results of ECE work that address the above-mentioned issues. This would include (i) activities to promote and develop standards for cleaner electricity production, energy efficiency and renewable energy; (ii) the ECE Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management, and the Charter on Sustainable Housing; (iii) efforts to make urban mobility sustainable, efficient and integrated; (iv) activities promoting safer and cleaner energy and transport systems; and (v) partnerships for promoting walking and cycling within the Pan-European Programme on Transport, Health and Environment (THE PEP).

(b) Sustainable management of ecosystems and natural resources

10. Sustainable management of ecosystems and natural resources looks to preserve and improve our environment for future generations while, at the same time, supporting socio-economic development. It calls for changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production, and protecting and sustainably managing natural resources, such as air, water, energy, land and forests.

11. What can ECE and its member States do to ensure sustainable ecosystem management and build a green economy? Which concrete policies must be designed and implemented to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and targets?

12. The discussion will highlight selected (recent and expected) key results of ECE work that address the above-mentioned issues. This would include: (i) the management of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements that set standards and create obligations

regarding water, air, industrial accidents, public participation and access to information and justice, and environmental impact assessment; (ii) policy recommendations and review of implementation through Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs); (iii) the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy; and (iv) the use of the United Nations Framework Classification for Energy and Mineral Resources to promote sustainable natural resource management.

(c) Connectivity and competitiveness for sustainable lives

13. Today's society, with its numerous networks (transport, trade, information), is highly connected. But some parts of the ECE region, even in the most developed countries, find themselves on the "edge" and less connected, with fewer opportunities for employment and growth. Innovation, the business environment (especially for small and medium-sized companies), sectoral reforms, trade and border-crossing facilitation are key elements for competitiveness. The ECE region includes some of the top-ranked, as well as some of the bottom-ranked countries, in global competitiveness ratings.

14. What can ECE and its member States do to improve connectivity and competitiveness as a pathway towards sustainable development? How to unblock land-locked transition economies and facilitate their regional and global integration?

15. The discussion will highlight selected (recent and expected) key results of ECE work that address the above-mentioned issues. This would include: (i) the 58 United Nations transport agreements promoting transport as a crucial driver of sustainable growth that provides access to markets and global supply chains; (ii) progress with the Unified Railway Law; (iii) facilitation of harmonized development of transport infrastructure (iv) facilitation of international trade through standards, norms and recommendations; (v) national assessments of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade; (vi) access to sustainable energy for all to promote development, including through smart grids; and (vii) supporting the knowledge-based economy by providing policy advice through Innovation Performance Reviews.

(d) Measuring and monitoring sustainable development

16. High-quality data and effective monitoring will be crucial to implement the proposed Sustainable Development Goals. This requires investment in national statistical capacities and new measurement approaches to capture different aspects of sustainable development. New data sources, "big data" and information technology offer new opportunities to track progress. There are different options for accountability at the regional level, ranging from data analysis to discussions at regional meetings, regional peer reviews, and sectoral reviews and assessments, including those carried out under ECE multilateral environmental agreements. Public participation, in line with the Aarhus Convention, is increasingly seen as a prerequisite for both monitoring and accountability.

17. What can ECE and its member States do to advance the "data revolution" and ensure adequate measurement, monitoring and participation for sustainable development?

18. The discussion will highlight selected (recent and expected) key results of ECE work that address the above-mentioned issues. This would include: (i) the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) recommendations on measuring sustainable development formulated by ECE in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Eurostat, and the CES Recommendations on Climate Change Related Statistics; (ii) the ECE tool "For Future Inland Transport Systems" that today allows to measure CO_2 impact from inland transport; and (iii) the Maastricht Declaration adopted by the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention that calls for greater

transparency in information for environmental decision-making; and (iv) the Espoo convention on environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context.

(e) Partnering for sustainable development

19. A key element in reducing poverty and improving quality of life is access to basic services such as sustainable and affordable energy, health care, education, affordable information technologies, transportation and safe drinking water. In addition to political will, in the coming decades these goals will require enormous investments. Countries in the ECE region with ageing or inadequate infrastructure face investments that cannot be met through tax revenues alone. Therefore, success will require a greater use of public-private partnerships (PPPs). At the same time, governments need to ensure that these partnerships address both the business need for full cost recovery and the need for equal access to services. Achieving strong partnerships for delivering sustainable development results will require working with other stakeholders, particularly the private sector, civil society, multilateral development banks and other international organizations.

20. What can ECE and its member States do to build stronger public-private partnerships that can contribute to sustainable development?

21. The discussion will highlight selected (recent and expected) key results of ECE work that address the above-mentioned issues. This would include the work of the ECE International PPP Centre of Excellence in supporting the development of standards, best practices and guidelines for PPPs, and in assisting governments to implement them through the work of the ECE PPP Business Advisory Board.

4. Discussion and endorsement of the outcome document

Documentation: E/ECE/1475

22. Member States are invited to discuss and endorse the draft outcome document stating their commitments to action on sustainable development in times of change; building bridges through cross-border and regional cooperation, engaging all stakeholders and partners, and using ECE tools and instruments.

23. The outcome of the session would form the regional contribution to the 2015 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

B. General segment

5. Progress in the implementation of the outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE

Documentation: E/ECE/1476

24. The Commission at its sixty-fifth session in 2013 adopted its decision A (65) on the "Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE". The Commission may wish to assess the progress made in the implementation of this outcome.

6. Report on activities of the Executive Committee

Documentation: E/ECE/1477

25. Following the ECE reform, the Executive Committee was established in 2006 to act as the governing body of ECE during the intersessional period of the Commission.

Member States will be provided with a report of the activities of EXCOM since the last Commission session and will be invited to provide their views and comments on the functioning of EXCOM.

7. Other issues calling for decision by the Commission

Documentation: E/ECE/1478

26. The Commission will be asked to approve any other decision as necessary.

8. Election of officers

27. Rule 12 of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission states: "The Commission shall, at each biennial session, elect a country from among its members to hold the chair for the period of the biennium. The representative of the elected country will be the Chairperson. The Commission will also, at the same meeting, elect two countries whose representatives will become the Vice-Chairpersons for the period of the biennium. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission will also serve as the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Executive Committee for the period of the biennium." Accordingly, under this item, elections for the Chair and Vice-Chairs for a period of two years will be held.

9. Other business

10. Adoption of the report of the session

III. Tentative timetable

Time	*Agenda item*
Tuesday, 14 April 2015	
10:00–10:30	Opening and adoption of the agenda Opening remarks: - Chairperson - Executive Secretary - Other high-level officials
	High-level segment: Committing to action on sustainable development in times of change
10:30–13:00	Item 2: High-level dialogue
13:00–15:00	Lunch break
15:00–18:00	Item 3: High-level thematic discussions (a) Sustainable energy and resilient communities (b) Sustainable management of ecosystems and natural resources
18:15	Reception
Wednesday, 15 April 2015	
	High-level segment (continued)
10:00–13:00	Item 3: (continued) (c) Connectivity and competitiveness for sustainable lives (d) Measuring and monitoring sustainable development
13:00–15:00	Lunch break
15:00–16:30	Item 3: (continued) (e) Partnering for sustainable development
16:30–17:15	Item 4: Discussion and endorsement of the outcome document
	General segment
17:15–18:00	Item 5: Progress in the implementation of the outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE
Thursday, 16 April 2015	
10:00–10.30	Item 6: Report on activities of the Executive Committee
10.30–11: 00	Item 7: Other issues calling for decision by the Commission
11:00–11:30	Item 8: Election of officers Item 9: Other business

	Meeting suspension to finalize the conclusions and decisions
16:00–17:00	Item 10: Adoption of report of the session